

ICPS newsletter

ICPS Promotes Public Participation in the Policy Process

As part of ICPS's Public Voice Project, a conference on "Improving Government Services to the People" was held on June 25-26 in Ternopil. We present a summary by Ms. Vira Naniivska, director of ICPS, and preliminary results of a survey of government officials in Ternopil, conducted by ICPS with the financial support of the World Bank Institute

According to Ms. Vira Naniivska, today we are witnessing historical events in the process of Ukrainian transformation. As is standard in any democracy, at last Ukraine has begun to apply social instruments to ensure participation of the public in state government.

Reform of totalitarian regimes requires changes in both the state machine and in society. Democratic society is based on a great number of institutions and social procedures. Two essential distinctions between totalitarian regimes and democracy are related to the process of policy development and the method of delivery of government services to the people.

Even the Ukrainian term *polityka* is changing its meaning in democratic conditions. Ukraine inherited this word from the Soviet regime, when it usually stood for activities aimed at gaining and holding on to power (like *politics* in English). But the term *polityka* as *policy* is a concept unfortunately rarely applied in this country.

This legacy of the Soviet era is a key feature of closed totalitarian regimes, where there is only one policy—the "correct" one. Alternative policies can only exist if the regime is changed, and such a development is perceived by those in power as hostile and threatening. Policy analysis and the research which explains its content and consequences for society are prohibited and persecuted. The public at large has no

possibility to influence the policymaking process.

Eight years ago, the government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic had a completely different goal, role, and functions, uniquely suited to the Soviet government mechanism. The major new function that has now to be created from scratch is the ability to prepare and implement state policy decisions under conditions of freedom of speech, parliament, political parties, and opposition. Once it becomes impossible to simply push through decisions for immediate execution—rather, it is required to defend decisions, show arguments for and against the alternatives, and analyze the consequences of different decisions—then the need arises to provide an analytical framework and win public support. The Soviet government machine did not have, and could not, the institutional knowledge or procedures for solving such problems. Unfortunately, even now, during the reform process, a foundation for the government's new responsibilities has not been created.

The Communist era is in the past, and Ukraine faces a situation that requires the creation of constant feedback mechanisms, otherwise known as an independent policy voice, that does not depend on particular personalities installed in state institutions. The possibility for the existence of an independent policy voice has been

Last Week

Government sector should be reduced. The subject of target levels of government revenues was discussed at the ICPS macroeconomic seminar on June 29.

According to research by Mr. Apostolos Papaphilippou and Mr. Alexei Sekarev, economic advisers to the Ukrainian-European Policy and Legal Advice Centre, Ukraine needs a smaller but more effective government sector, one that encourages the development of the private sector. Mr. Sekarev believes that only reduction of government can help state finances to recover.

The researchers suggest that target revenues from the broad government should be about 30 percent of GDP. This figure means that the present level of revenue collection is about correct, and attempts to collect any more revenues will be futile. That is why in drafting the 2000 budget, the government and the parliament should adopt this year's revenue level as the limit for expenditures next year.

Mr. Volodymyr Dubrovsky, project advisor with the Harvard Institute for International Development, agreed and noted that the state has no right to require the same level of tax payment as countries of Western Europe because the current quality of government services is not satisfactory, and the state is not able to ensure fulfillment of the contract obligations.

Mr. Bohdan Lysovolyk, acting resident representative of the IMF in Ukraine, believes that the tax burden is too heavy in Ukraine. However, he said, the main problem is the inequality of tax obligations.

a major achievement in the period of Ukraine's independence.

Institutions such as the International Centre for Policy Studies are elements of an open society. In democratic states, similar establishments are called public policy *think tanks*, serving as intellectual centers and providing analytical and consultative support for social development programs. These establishments, as a rule, fulfill the orders of state institutions concerning strategic planning and national policy in a number of different areas.

Intellectual support of the policymaking process entails studying policy and holding public discussions on research results. Consequently, ICPS concentrates mostly on conducting independent research projects and organizing dialogue between the public and government officials, foreign experts, non-government representatives, and the mass media.

Complete removal of the public from state policy formation has resulted in a lack of confidence in government bodies and the decisions they make. Absence of effective control creates corruption incentives among state authorities. Thus there is an acute need today in Ukraine to create new procedures and mechanisms of public communication, and to involve all of society in working on the country's development strategy.

The goal of the Public Voice pilot project is to implement mechanisms and procedures which promote public participation in building an effective, responsible, and open government, as well as assure public participation in the policymaking process.

The project facilitates public input and control over the policymaking process by means of initiating open budget hearings and monitoring the quality of service provided by state authorities, as well as mass media involvement to make these processes transparent to the public.

The conference on "Improving Government Services to the People" held on June 25-26 in Ternopil was organized by the Ternopil municipal rada, the Ternopil

Preliminary results of the survey of civil servants in Ternopil

The survey was conducted in departments of the Ternopil municipal rada through individual interviews with 60 civil servants, in order to study their experience in service delivery to the town-dwellers, and also to assess the service quality, the transparency and integrity of activities of these civil servants.

The quality of service delivery

65 percent of the surveyed civil servants believes that their departments are making efforts to improve the quality of services they deliver to the town-dwellers. They do it by different methods—from additional notices and explanations in mass media to the delivery of services in a shorter time than required by current legislation. But organisations do not pay much attention to other methods of improving the quality of their own work, such as staff training.

Relations with citizens are rather difficult: the majority of respondents (80 percent) emphasises that visitors to their departments have a low level of legal awareness, 65 percent notes egoism and 70 percent perceives aggression of these persons in conversation with civil servants. Such behaviour does not promote better relations between parties, and affects the speed and quality of service delivery. When asked whether their organisation had a complaints system on service quality, 83.3 percent responded positively. These complaints are analysed, and then appropriate decisions are made.

Shadow economy and corruption

This part of the survey was the most difficult, as 31.7 percent of respondents refused to answer because of unawareness or unwillingness to discuss the stated questions. Describing the situation at their departments and other divisions of the municipal rada, 65 percent of surveyed civil servants asserts that corruption exists to some extent and 25 percent are sure that corruption is widespread. As to the cause of corruption incidents between civil servants and visitors, 42 percent of respondents cited visitor offers, 34 said it was an established routine, and 17 cited the demands of officials.

Overall, 87 percent of the respondents agree that both parties benefit by the practice of informal payments. 35 percent of civil servants believes that both parties are still sorry for their involvement in bribery, but the other 65 percent is convinced that nobody regrets such actions. Heavy taxation, weak implementation of adjudication, failure to observe laws, and low level of salaries of civil servants are the main reasons for corruption in Ukraine.

How this problem can be solved

75 percent of surveyed civil servants believes that corruption and bribery should be liquidated at their organization, but 90 percent among them know nothing about the existence or development of anti-corruption programs. According to the respondents, increased salaries of civil servants and the personal example of management will be the key solutions to corruption.

8.7 percent of respondents hopes for the success of anti-corruption measures within the first six months, 4.3 percent each believe that the problem will be solved in one or three years, and 17.4 percent thinks that this process will take about five years, but the majority of civil servants (67.4 percent) are sure that at least 10 years are needed to overcome corruption.

mayor's executive office, and the Agency for Urban Development in cooperation with the Canadian International Development

Agency, the World Bank, the World Bank Institute, ICPS, and the Ukrainian Free Economy Foundation.

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